

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

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AMEMBASSY OSOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 14205

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT UR

SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 27 MEETING OF CONSTITUTION COMMISSION, OTHER
LEADERSHIP INDICATORS

SUMMARY: CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION CHAired BY BREZHNEV MET
SEPTEMBER 27 TO RUBBER-STAMP CHANGES IN DRAFT CONSTITUTION
PROPOSED BY COMMISSION SECRETARIAT. TV AND PRESS PHOTOS
INDICATED MIX-UP IN LEADERSHIP SEATING ARRANGEMENT, WITH
CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER RASHIDOV APPARENTLY LOST IN
THE INITIAL SHUFFLE. ULTIMATE SEATING ORDER APPEARED
TO BE ACCORDING TO SENIORITY, WITH SOLE EXCEPTION OF
DEMICHEV, WHO WAS TWO SEATS FURTHER AWAY FROM HEAD OF
TABLE THAN IS SENIORITY DICTATED. IN OTHER LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENTS, RUMORS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE ABOUT NEW
JOB OF "VICE PRESIDENT," MEDIA COVERAGE OF KIRILENKO'S
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BRONZE BUST WAS MORE LAUDATORY THAN THAT ACCORDED OTHER
RECENTLY "BUSTED" LEADERS, AND THE "CULT OF BREZHNEV"
SEEMS TO BE GROWING IN ANTICIPATION OF THE 60TH
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION. END SUMMARY

1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION. IN WHAT WILL PROBABLY
BE ITS LAST SESSION, THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION

GATHERED SEPTEMBER 27 UNDER BREZHNEV'S CHAIRMANSHIP TO APPROVE CHANGES IN DRAFT CONSTITUTION PROPOSED BY COMMISSION'S SECRETARIAT. TASS ACCOUNT OF MEETING (WE ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS FULL TEXT) WAS READ ON SOVIET RADIO AT 5:30 PM SEPTEMBER 27 AND FRONT-PAGED IN IZVESTIYA THAT EVENING AS WELL AS IN CENTRAL NEWSPAPERS SEPTEMBER 28.

2. BREZHNEV'S OPENING REMARKS LEAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE NATIONWIDE DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION WAS OF PROPAGANDISTIC RATHER THAN SUBSTANTIVE IMPORTANCE, AND THAT WHATEVER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN TO PROPOSALS MADE DURING THIS DISCUSSION TOOK PLACE IN THE COMMISSION'S SECRETARIAT, NOT IN THE COMMISSION ITSELF. FOR EXAMPLE:

--BREZHNEV SAID THE MAIN RESULT OF THE DISCUSSION WAS ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION BY THE PARTY AND THE SOVIET PEOPLE OF "THE GREAT MONOLITHIC UNITY, THE DEEP INTEREST IN SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF THE MAIN TASKS OF BUILDING COMMUNISM;"

--HE INDICATED THAT SOME PROPOSALS WERE APPROVED, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OF "LABOR UNDER SOCIALISM," "CONSIDERATE ATTITUDE TOWARD SOCIALIST PROPERTY," AND "FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY;" BUT

--RATHER THAN INVITING DISCUSSION OR FURTHER PROPOSALS FROM THE COMMISSION, BREZHNEV "EXPRESSED THE HOPE
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THAT THE COMMISSION WOULD APPROVE THE SUGGESTED CHANGES IN THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION."

3. FOLLOWING PONOMAREV'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AMENDMENTS "INTRODUCED DURING THE FINAL STAGE OF WORK ON THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION," AND "DISCUSSION" BY SEVERAL LESSER LIGHTS, THE COMMISSION DECIDED TO:

--"AGREE FULLY" WITH THE SUBSTANCE OF BREZHNEV'S REMARKS;

--APPROVE THE DRAFT AS AMENDED; AND

--TRANSMIT THE DRAFT TO THE PRESIDUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET, FOR FURTHER TRANSMISSION TO THE FORTHCOMING SPECIAL SUPREME SOVIET SESSION.

4. BREZHNEV'S HEALTH, AND KREMLINOLOGICAL NOTES: JUDGING FROM TV, WHICH CARRIED FILM OF SEATED BREZHNEV READING THE FIRST HALF OF HIS STATEMENT, LEONID IL'ICH SEEMED NORMAL IN APPEARANCE. AS USUAL, HIS DICTION WAS SLURRED, BUT NOT PARTICULARLY BADLY.

5. COMPARISON OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MEETING IN IZVESTIYA SEPTEMBER 27 AND IN THE CENTRAL PRESS SEPTEMBER 28

INDICATED AN INITIAL MIX-UP IN LEADERSHIP SEATING, WHICH LEFT CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER RASHIDOV SITTING ON THE SIDELINES. IN THE IZVESTIYA PHOTO, ALL OF THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP PRESENT WAS SEATED AROUND A LARGE CONFERENCE TABLE, EXCEPT FOR RASHIDOV, WHO SOMEHOW WOUND UP SITTING AGAINST THE WALL, NEXT TO TASS DIRECTOR ZAMYATIN. THE TASS PHOTO APPEARING IN PRAVDA AND OTHER CENTRAL PAPERS SEPTEMBER 28 SHOWED RASHIDOV IN HIS PROPER PLACE AT THE TABLE, BETWEEN USTINOV AND MASHEROV (APPARENTLY MASHEROV AND ALL OTHERS SEATED TO HIS LEFT MOVED DOWN ONE PLACE TO MAKE ROOM FOR RASHIDOV).

6. THIS RESHUFFLING INDICATES THE GENERAL IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO PROTOCOL BY THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP, AND
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ALSO HIGHLIGHTS THE FACT THAT OF ALL THE LEADERS PRESENT ONLY DEMICHEV WAS SEATED OUT OF RANK ORDER. THUS:
--TO BREZHNEV'S RIGHT WAS SUSLOV, MAZUROV, PEL'SHE, KULAKOV, KUNAYEV, ROMANOV, PONOMAREV, SOLOMENTSEV, KAPITONOV, DOLGIKH;
--TO BREZHNEV'S LEFT SAT KOSYGIN, GRISHIN, SHCHERBITSKIY, ANDROPOV, USTINOV, RASHIDOV (AFTER THE RESHUFFLE), MASHEROV, ALIYEV, DEMICHEV,

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ZIMYANIN, CHERNENKO, AND RYABOV;

-- THE SEATING ORDER CLEARLY WAS FULL POLITBURO MEMBERS, FOLLOWED BY CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBERS AND THEN CC SECRETARIES, WITH EACH INDIVIDUAL SEATED ON ONE OR THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TABLE ACCORDING TO HIS AFFILIATION AS WELL AS HIS LENGTH OF TERM IN OFFICE;

-- THE ONLY OBVIOUS EXCEPTION TO THIS WAS DEMICHEV, WHO SAT "BELOW" CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBERS MASHEROV AND ALIYEV, BOTH OF WHOM ARE JUNIOR TO HIM IN TERMS OF TENURE IN OFFICE; HE REMAINED IN THE SAME SPOT EVEN AFTER ALMOST EVERYONE ON HIS SIDE OF THE TABLE MOVED DOWN TO MAKE ROOM FOR RASHIDOV.

7. WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF RUSAKOV, KIRILENKO WAS THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE LEADERSHIP TO MISS THIS EVENT. TO OUR CONFIDENTIAL

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KNOWLEDGE, THE LAST PUBLIC MENTION OF KIRILENKO'S WHEREABOUTS WAS ON AUGUST 19, IN CONNECTION WITH THE TITO VISIT.

8. OTHER LEADERSHIP NOTES. WHETHER PRESENTLY ON VACATION OR INDISPOSED, KIRILENKO WAS IN THE NEWS ON SEPTEMBER 23, WHEN THE CENTRAL PRESS CARRIED A TASS ITEM ANNOUNCING THAT HIS BRONZE BUST HAD BEEN UNVEILED IN KIRILENKO'S HOMETOWN OF ALEKSEYEVKA. COMPARISON OF THIS TASS ITEM WITH SIMILAR ITEMS REPORTING BRONZE BUSTS FOR SUSLOV, KOSYGIN AND USTINOV SHOWS A SLIGHT PLUS FOR KIRILENKO, IN THAT SEVEN SPEAKERS ARE LISTED AS HAVING PARTICIPATED IN HIS CEREMONY, WHERE THE USTINOV AND KOSYGIN CEREMONIES HAD FIVE SPEAKERS AND SUSLOV CEREMONY FOUR. WE THUS CREDIT KIRILENKO WITH A BRONZE BUST BOOST.

9. RUMORS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE ABOUT THE NEW POST OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDUM, ALTHOUGH IT IS APPARENT THAT NO ONE PARTICIPATING IN THIS GUESSING GAME IS BASING HIS SPECULATION ON SOLID EVIDENCE. NAMES CURRENTLY IN PLAY AS POSSIBLE CANDIDATES FOR THE NEW JOB INCLUDE GROMYKO, SHCHERBITSKIY, KIRILENKO AND CHERNENKO. PERHAPS THE MOST INTRIGUING RUMOR, FROM AN EE DIPLOMAT, IS THAT NO ONE WILL BE NAMED TO THE NEW JOB AT THE FORTHCOMING SUPREME SOVIET SESSION.

10. WE SEEM TO BE WITNESSING SOMETHING OF AN ESCALATION IN

THE "CULT OF BREZHNEV", PERHAPS AS PART OF THE BUILDUP TOWARD THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY IN NOVEMBER. FOR EXAMPLE:

--IN THE LATEST BATCH OF POLITICAL POSTERS ON SALE IN MOSCOW BOOKSTORES, BREZHNEV'S PHOTOGRAPH APPEARS IN THE CENTER ON ONE OF THE LARGEST; NO OTHER LEADER IS SO HONORED;

--SOVIET JOURNAL ARTICLES HAVE BEGUN TO USE THE GLOWING LANGUAGE OF THE CC DECREE ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY IN REFERRING
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TO BREZHNEV; THAT DECREE TERMS HIM "THE OUTSTANDING CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL LEADER, A TRUE MARXIST-LENINIST, AN INDEFATIGABLE FIGHTER FOR THE CAUSE OF COMMUNISM;"

--DURING THE SEPTEMBER 28 "VREMYA" TV NEWS PROGRAM, A LARGE PORTRAIT OF BREZHNEV, RATHER THAN THE USUAL PORTRAIT OF LENIN, PROVIDED THE BACKDROP FOR A MEETING OF THE MOSCOW OBKOM PARTY ORGANIZATION; AND A FEATURE STORY CONCERNING A NEW EXHIBIT AT THE LENIN MUSEUM CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT BREZHNEV WAS THE LENIN OF TODAY.
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